

day. If she feels that it would be appropriate for you to come back to be seen, you will be offered a clinic appointment, or if necessary, an appropriate diagnostic test within 14 days of your telephone call.

### **Will I continue to have routine mammograms?**

Yes. Unless it has been otherwise specified at the end of your treatment, you will continue to be called for yearly mammograms for at least five years after your treatment, or until you are the right age to join the national NHS Breast Screening Programme. If, as a result of your specific treatment, you do not need to have annual mammograms, you will be told this, as will your GP.

### **Are there any other regular tests that I may need to have?**

Following your treatment you and your GP will be told if you need any additional regular checks, such as bone density scans (DEXA scans). These scans can tell us if your bones are thinning which could lead to a condition called osteoporosis. These will be organised via your GP who will receive clear instructions on what you need.

### **How the OAFU helpline works**

At the end of your treatment, you will have a special open access consultation with your breast care nurse. During this appointment, she will explain exactly how the OAFU helpline works, teach you the signs and symptoms that you need to watch out for and give you the direct telephone number on which you can contact her with any symptoms or concerns.

If you need to ring this number, please leave a short message including your **name, hospital number and telephone number** on the answer phone. This is checked regularly from Monday to Friday between 09.00hrs and 17.00hrs and you will be phoned back by the breast care nurse by the end of the next working day.

She will talk you through any symptoms or concerns that you have and decide with you whether you need to be brought back into clinic or have any further diagnostic tests. If she feels this is necessary then you will be offered a clinic appointment within 14 days of phoning.

11/01/2012 review date 11/01/2015



## Welcome to open access follow-up

### Breast unit

### Information for patients

Living our values – excellent,  
kind, responsible, respectful

## Why have you given me this leaflet?

You have been given this leaflet to explain the open access follow-up programme which St George's has put in place for patients who have been treated for breast diseases, including cancer.

## What is open access follow-up?

Open access follow-up (OAFU) is a new type of follow-up at St George's Hospital. It is where routine, clinical examination-type appointments are replaced by a system where patients can call us when they have a problem, so that they don't have to come to hospital at times when they are feeling well and symptom-free.

## Why have you introduced open access follow-up?

We have introduced OAFU to improve the service to patients. It means that you don't have to make unnecessary trips to the hospital at times when you are feeling perfectly well.

Patients often find traditional clinical appointments are a source of anxiety and can lead to being tempted to put off

reporting worrying signs and symptoms if a routine clinical appointment is 'not too far away.'

Also, it's been proved that new problems are unlikely to be picked up by clinical examination alone. Most are identified by patients themselves, in between routine appointments.

## Are you the only hospital to have OAFU?

No, although it may be called different things in different places. More and more hospitals across the country are changing the way patients are followed up after treatment for breast cancer. Hillingdon and Addenbrookes Hospitals also have OAFU (called 'patient-led follow-up'), and have been rolling it out successfully for many years. All trusts in the South West London Cancer Network are working towards implementing this kind of follow-up.

## What information will I be given?

In addition to this leaflet, you will have a consultation at the end of your treatment and will be taught how to be body and breast aware, including the specific

symptoms that you should report without delay to your breast care nurse.

You will also be given written information on:

- Your diagnosis and medication
- The treatment you have had and the possible side effects
- Signs and symptoms to report
- Being body and breast aware
- Arrangements for annual mammograms (and bone density scans if appropriate)
- How to use the special direct helpline which gives you fast access to your breast care nurse if you need it
- The process your breast care nurse will follow if you need to be booked back into clinic at any time in the future.

## Will I still be able to access the Breast service in the event of concerns?

Yes. You can call the breast care nurses on the dedicated OAFU helpline telephone number if you have any queries or problems, you will be encouraged to do so. The helpline is monitored between 09.00hrs and 17.00hrs Monday to Friday and you will be called back by your breast care nurse by the end of the next working